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EAP/MTS FOR MICHAEL TAYLOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SN](#) [BU](#) [ASEAN](#)
SUBJECT: ASEAN ENVOY CONCEPT -- SINGAPORE PREFERS TO KEEP
THE FOCUS ON BACKING GAMBARI

REF: A. STATE 142628

1B. SINGAPORE 1893

Classified By: DCM Daniel Shields; reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) MFA Permanent Secretary Bilahari Kausikan called DCM in to the MFA October 18 to provide a formal response to Ref A request for views on the possibility of ASEAN's designating a high-level envoy to Burma. Kausikan said that, as promised, Singapore had carefully considered the idea. The conclusion reached was that Singapore, rather than pursuing the ASEAN envoy concept, would focus on supporting the efforts of UN Special Advisor Gambari and the United Nations. Singapore had based its decision on its impression that Gambari was "not enthusiastic" about additional channels to Burma and that Burma "categorically" had decided to deal exclusively with Gambari. Asked to clarify the latter conclusion, Kausikan said that Burma's Deputy Foreign Minister had "volunteered" this view to Singapore's Ambassador to Burma, Robert Chua.

12. (C) The DCM asked if Ambassador Chua had used the opportunity to press Burma to stop detaining and arresting people, to immediately release political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi and to begin a genuine dialogue with opposition leaders leading toward a transition to civilian democratic rule. Kausikan said it was not that kind of a meeting; Chua and the Deputy Foreign Minister ran into each other at an event they both attended. Kausikan added that Burma seems upset with Singapore for having pushed ASEAN into making a tough statement on Burma. At the Soe Win funeral, Than Shwe shook the hand of Singapore Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Balaji Sadasivan but did not say anything to him, Kausikan said.

13. (C) Kausikan said Singapore planned to use the opportunity of upcoming ASEAN summit meetings to press for change in Burma. ASEAN had already begun circulating various draft texts for the meetings calling on Burma to change its behavior. Burma had objected, but ASEAN would go forward on this. Kausikan said it was necessary for all the summit venues (ASEAN, ASEAN Plus 3, and East Asia Summit) to "pronounce themselves" on Burma. He predicted there would be "robust" discussions of Burma "at least among the original ASEAN members." If Laos, Cambodia or Vietnam refused to support tough final statements on Burma, Singapore would simply proceed with a Chairman's statement that captured the views expressed. Kausikan predicted that the statements that emerged would be similar in tone to the ASEAN Chair Statement

of September 27 and the UNSC Presidential Statement of October 11.

14. (C) Regarding latest developments in Burma, Kausikan said the situation appears calm on the surface, but arrests are continuing. Singapore understands that India has met with Aung San Suu Kyi at the permanent secretary level. In an indication of the regime's continuing inability to manage the economy, there are rumors of an ongoing reshuffle of economic officials, he said.

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